613 794 inflicting or witholding sickness and all types of misfortune to the lineage, and, to ward off these, was propitiated with offerings of cooked food annually and in special emergencies on the advice of the astrologer as diviner. In particular, she [842] had power to bless with fertility women of the lineage, and so was worshipped before a pre-puberty marriage rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl.

[778] Though not jointly owned by the lineage but rather by that branch of it which inherited the gardens on which they stood, the oldest ancestral house of the lineage, from which its forbears sprang, the original ancestor shrine in this house, and the sacred snake-grove in its [48] garden, were regarded with reverence by all lineage-members and stood as symbols of their unity. These are discussed below in connection with rites relating to the property-group.

613 608 621 (3) Fission and adoption in the Lineage

Since lineages were usually groups of actual and not putative matrilineal kin, it was inevitable that (since the birthrate is not uniform throughout a population) while some might remain stable in numbers over generations, others would expand greatly, and others would decrease and become in danger of extinction. When great growth in numbers in a lineage took place, some segments appear even traditionally to have hived off to other villages occupied by their own subcaste where kanam paddy lands and janmam garden lands were available. Such a segment, on moving to a new village, was adopted as retainers

[the dharma devi, or lineage goddess --- Analyst]

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formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the caste.

Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess, named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sickness and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrologer might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was worshipped before a tāli rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage members appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was believed that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess, she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.

In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken without the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If, moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an individual woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

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of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counseling the kāranavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest woman was the kāranavan's own or classificatory younger sister or sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal division of duties was common.

Rites of the Property Group The property group jointly invited enangar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feeding, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the tāli rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes. Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and attended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the property group in the case of a man.

The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed responsible for the fertility or barrenness[1] of taravād women. If a woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were necessary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell into a trance.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

[1] Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and sickness in childbirth.

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had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members, twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance, in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property documents reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property, could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters. A man could therefore never be a member of a different property group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother, or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or great-uncle.

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own daughters and grandchildren, but sisters "stood in" for one another in caring for their children and contributed their work in a manner conducive to the general welfare.

Between sisters, especially own sisters, there was deep personal affection as well as loyalty to the sibling group and to the taravād. Sisters were also rivals, often squabbling over jewelry, clothing, and favors. Both rivalry and affection were most intense between sisters close in age.

Most women died in their ancestral homes among their siblings and children. Only a woman whose forebears and brothers were all dead might move away from her sisters into a separate property group headed by her son as kāranavan. Even so, sisters often lived to experience covert disputes between their children, who looked forward to the day when they would separate into new branch taravāds. In the last resort sisters would support their own children in quarrels, although they tried not to become involved in such disputes but to preserve their mutual amity.

MARRIAGE

The taravād was obviously of very great strength as an economic and legal corporation. Correspondingly, marriage was the slenderest of ties.

Every ten or twelve years, the immature girls of one generation within a lineage were ritually married on the same day by men drawn from their enangar lineages. Before the ceremony the girls were secluded for three days and caused to observe ritual prohibitions as if they had menstruated. (The actual rite of tying the tāli or gold ornament around the bride's neck is the central rite of "normal" marriage among most of the patrilineal castes of South India.) After the tāli rite, each couple was secluded for three days in a room of the ancestral house. Their seclusion clearly marked a ceremonial if not an actual defloration, and travelers' accounts of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries indicate that the brides were actually deflowered at this time (Stanley, 1865: 24; Kerr, 1811: chap. 6; Hamilton, ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 174). During the seclusion period, rites were performed to the goddess Bhagavadi to enhance the girls' fertility. On the fourth morning each couple took a purifying bath and ate a meal together. In Calicut and Walluvanad, although apparently not in Cochin, each bridegroom then tore in two the lower cloth worn by the girl in the period of seclusion. He kept one half and handed the other to the girl. Their personal obligations ended, the bridegrooms left the household.

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monial recognition through the performance of death pollution, but that was strictly all.

Nayars did, however, understand and attach significance to the physiological role of the male in procreation. They expected a child to resemble his genitor and to be unusually intelligent if his father were a Brahman or a Nayar aristocrat. A man is said to have been especially fond of a child whom he knew with reasonable certainty to be his own. He would make small gifts to him, play with him on visits, and offer him friendly counsel as he grew older. However, a man had no right to interfere in any way in his child's training, and the child had no customary obligations to him. If he ended his relationship with the mother he had no further contact with the child.

Children addressed all their mothers' husbands as acchan, adding the caste title in the case of a father of higher caste. Both boys and girls stood in the father's presence and accorded him respect, but without the extreme submissiveness due to an older matrilineal kinsman. In spite of the Malayāli adage "No Nayar knows his father," it seems probable that almost every Nayar regarded some particular man as his genitor; but his relationship with this man might be anything from a permanent, warm attachment to almost total lack of recognition. Certainly differences of paternity created no institutionalized divisions within a sibling group.

No rights or obligations existed between an individual and his patrilateral kin. These relationships, when they existed, were a matter of individual friendliness or of polite etiquette. A person might visit his or her father's taravād as long as the father's marriage to the mother endured, especially if the father lived close by. However, although marriage has been monogamous for the past seventy to eighty years, I found in one Cochin village in 1949 that only 48 per cent of sibling groups containing children under fifteen had any contact with their father's matrilineal kin. In the other cases patrilateral relationships were suspended because the father lived at a distance, because he had divorced the mother, or because his kinswomen had quarreled with the mother.

In what follows, the term "father" refers to any husband of the mother in the sambandham relationship, and the term "patrilateral kin," to the matrilineal kin of such a man.

Patrilateral kin of the father's generation or older were accorded friendly respect. Cross cousins of the same sex and caste had a familiar, mildly joking relationship if they maintained contact with one another. If their families remained friendly, cross cousins of

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
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kāranavan's death, his adopted successor was too young to manage the property. This passed temporarily into the management of a man from still another branch of the same lineage. When the true claimant came of age he disputed his guardian's management. After a bitter lawsuit the guardian was deposed in a British court. He continued to live on the *taravād*'s land and to harass his young successor. When the guardian died, the young *kāranavan* in his anger failed to arrange for the cremation rites until several days had passed and the corpse had decomposed. The ghost of this proxy *kāranavan* has harrassed his successors ever since, causing many of them to die of diabetes. The present members regard this condition as a decomposition of the body during life. The ghost's anger is so great that propitiations do not wholly avert its vengeance, although special offerings temporarily delay the progress of the disease.

The misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts include many forms of sickness, mental disorder, female barrenness and miscarriages, all of which are attributed to actual bodily possession by a ghost. Financial loss, crop failure and the deaths of babies or cows may also result from the ghosts' displeasure. I could find no very clear distinction between the misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts and those brought about by the patron goddess, by malevolent alien ghosts, or by the witchcraft or sorcery of enemies. Indeed it is obvious that the Nāyars themselves do not clearly restrict particular misfortunes to particular agents. For on the occasion of a misfortune, the *kāranavan* must often consult the village astrologer (Kanisan) who makes calculations to discover the responsible agent. He then instructs the *kāranavan* how to carry out its propitiation or to accomplish its control.

However, my information suggests that some misfortunes may be more likely to be attributed to some agents than to others. Miscarriages, for example, seem to be often attributed to ancestresses, to female alien ghosts, or to the patron goddess. Barrenness is often attributed to the snake gods of the *taravād*, who are believed to guard the fertility of its women. These misfortunes seem to be less often attributed to male ghosts, although some instances are known. Perhaps most important, however, circumstances immediately preceding the misfortune may help to determine the agent. If a forebear has died recently, or if a *taravād* has failed to propitiate its lineage ghosts or patron goddess, the *kāranavan* may not even trouble to consult the astrologer, or the astrologer may merely corroborate his suspicions. Similarly, if a man has an enemy with whom he has recently quarreled and then himself falls ill with fever, he is like to assume that the enemy has engaged the services of a witch or sorcerer against him. In small villages whose population is stable, moreover, the astrologer makes it his business to know the affairs of his clients and thus to diagnose appropriate causes for their misfortunes.

Sociological analysis. A satisfactory analysis of the functions of lineage ghosts must take into account those of other supernatural agents and of secular authorities. Among the Nāyars, supernatural agents have played only a minor role in punishing offences against men, as distinct from those against themselves. This is undoubtedly because human authorities of various kinds had strong judicial functions, deriving from their incorporation in a kingdom. In the last analysis their authority was backed by the military power of the king or chief. Among Nāyars, civil disputes were tried by village headman or district chief. Certain major crimes against the kingdom's religious laws were tried in the Raja's court. They included the killing of a cow or a Brahman or fornication with lower caste persons. The killing or assault of a Nāyar

4: Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
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to lineage ghosts who were junior to them in age. The living of the *taravād* themselves make offerings to them and do them obeisance, whereas the ghosts of hostile serfs are especially polluting and malevolent and can be propitiated only by persons of their own caste.

Even so, the ghost of such a lower caste person who is honored for heroism by the *taravād* of his masters may, if he died violently, be feared as an alien ghost by other *taravāds*. In Kottayam in the eighteenth century, for example, there lived a certain Nāyar village headman who had as his servant a man of the Tiyyar caste of cultivators. During the invasions of Malabar by the Mysorean Muslim general, Tippu Sultan, in the 1780's, the Nāyar's *taravād* was threatened with conquest and forcible conversion to Islam. Having sent the women and children of his house into hiding, the *kāranavan* prayed before his lineage's patron goddess until the Muslims were at his gates. He then persuaded his Tiyyar servant to kill him, being unwilling to face the disgrace of circumcision at the hands of the Muslims. Having slain his master, the servant hid himself in an outhouse of the *taravād*. In the night he went forth and attacked the Muslims single-handed, killing several of them to avenge his master, before he was himself put to death. The ghost of this servant is now propitiated along with the lineage ghosts of his master's *taravād*. It is also, however, propitiated as an alien ghost by several other *taravāds* in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, malevolent alien ghosts are those of Nāyars who died violently, often in expiation of some crime. They may have committed suicide after being outcaste for contravention of religious laws, or in the case of a woman, may have been killed by their matrilineal kinsmen after cohabiting with low caste men. A woman called Kadangōtt Makkam, also of Kottayam, became a ghost in this way. According to legend, she was suspected by her sister-in-law of having sexual relations with an Oilmonger. Her brothers banished her from the *taravād*. She was agonized at the thought of leaving her children, and drowned them in the *taravād's* well. Her *kāranavan* and brothers were then obliged to stab her to death—the customary penalty for fornication outside the caste, and perhaps, also, for murder within the *taravād*. She became an alien ghost particularly liable to prevent women from bearing children, and is established in the gardens of several local *taravāds*.

Such alien ghosts, although Nāyar, are also propitiated by an officiant of the lower caste. The propitiant is usually from some caste which specializes in exorcism and counter-magic, such as Mannāns (washermen), Kanisans (astrologers, who in any case diagnose the misfortune and advise the propitiation) or Pānans (umbrella-makers, exorcists and agricultural workers). The mode of propitiation is the same as in the case of a low caste ghost.

Finally, an alien ghost is occasionally that of a Brahman who died violently. Brahman ghosts, or Brahmarākṣas, unlike all other ghosts, must be propitiated with vegetarian offerings by a Brahman priest hired for the purpose. But Brahman priests, unlike low caste officiants, never enter a state of voluntary possession by ghosts. Religious possession is particularly a low caste institution. It is not practiced by Brahmans, and when found among Nāyars, it is practiced by young men, women, and other persons who lack secular power. Brahmans do not need to become possessed by their ghosts and deities, for they have the power to demand whatever offerings and fees they require. Low caste propitiants need the authority of a supernatural agent in order to make demands on their high caste masters.

5: Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
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of particular impor- 842
tance is the ritual conducted in the case of barren women who 755
seek divine intercession of the serpent gods. The afflicted 782
couple come on a Sunday morning to the snake temple 776
after a purificatory bath and after putting on new garments. They request the priest to conduct a propitiatory *puja* and offer flour to the deity. Thereafter, a bronze plate on which the name of the person is carved is placed inverted at a spot. After a year when they have been blessed with a child, they repair to the temple once more to offer thanks for the boon granted. The child is helped to lift the bronze plate and under it a small serpent is observed signifying that all is well. In the event of there being no snake underneath, [763] it is taken as a bad omen predicting the death of the child. If even after ten years no child is born to the couple, the unretrieved bronze plate is discarded, on the presumption that the deity has not seen fit to grant the wishes of the devotees.

There is also a class of pious people who have through their 755
devotion to, and worship of, the snake deity, acquired the art of 759
curing victims of snake-bite. They are called *sarpa vaidyas* and cases of snake-bite are brought to them for treatment. The man chants certain magical formulae and tears a betel leaf in front of a pot of milk. The serpent is supposed to come out of hiding and to withdraw the venom, thus effecting a gradual cure.

But modern trends are contrariwise, and a gradual decline 178
is discernible in the ritual of snake worship in a large majority 771
of households which have snake shrines. Less emphasis is paid to the traditional worship of the serpent, and what little propitiation is done is more or less symbolic. Makeshift arrangements are often made, and worship by proxy is offered by the priest, in the absence of the family members, who merely pay a fixed sum to the priest for his labours, and thereby absolve themselves of the guilt of neglecting the snake gods.

Apart from simplification of the ritual of snake worship, [778] yet another symptom of the decay of the cult appears to be the reduced importance that is given to the upkeep of the existing snake shrines. Many erstwhile sacred shrines are in a dilapidated condition. Perhaps in future, snake worship itself might become a thing of the past.

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4 Dubois & Beauchamps: *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 641.

5 Hodson: *The Nalthois*, 110.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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The *Santâna gópâlam* yantram. As a whole, it represents Sri Krishna. The letters in it (there are 101) put together in a certain way form a mantram. It is used by barren women so that they may bear children. It may be traced on a metal plate and worn in the usual way, or on a slab of butter which is then eaten. When the latter method is adopted it is repeated on 41 successive days, during which the woman as well as the Panikkar may not have sexual connection.

The *Srî Sûkra* yantram is another used by childless men and women in order to obtain offspring. The others are prophylactic against evil spirits (chiefly), to defeat enemies, to succeed in all undertakings and prevent loss of property by theft, to win over the good feeling of others, and so on. The *Sudarsana* yantram not only relieves sickness, but when drawn in 5 colours on the ground and worshipped while repeating a mantram (too long to quote) wards off the evil influence caused through black magic! Another, the *Navva* yantram, drawn in ashes of cowdung on a new cloth which is then tied round the waist, relieves a women in labour. Yet another, the *Asvârûdha* yantram (Asva, horse; ârûḍha, to climb) would also be useful to some people, as a person wearing it is able to cover long distances easily on horseback; and he may make the most refractory horse amenable by tying it round its neck. It will also help to cure sick cattle. In some the letters or syllables form a distinct mantram, while in others each has its own mystic meaning.

Let me hasten to assure any one desirous of applying one of these charms to himself that they are entirely inoperative unless accompanied in the first place with the mystic rite which is the secret of the Panikkar.

Magic—The Evil Eye.—One day as I reached my camp in the Kôttayam taluk, North Malabar, my ears were assailed by the din of incessant drumming hard by. In the evening I was able to see and converse with the drummer, Châtu by name, aged 23, by caste Malayan. The Malayans are hereditary professional magicians, few in number, inferior in the social scale. They are not the only magicians. We have seen already (Bulletin, Volume III, No. 1, page 50) that some of the Nambûtiri Brahmans practise magic; but to the Malayan the Nâyar appears as often as to any other kind of mantram-man.

Châtu was delightfully communicative. He had been putting away the effects of the evil eye from one of his clientèle;—hence the din. In effect he said: certain

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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engaged in prayer and meditation for seven years. His devotion so pleased Surya, the sun god, that he appeared before him in human form and handed him a grandah, which is to this day the greatest work on magic in existence. The kind attention of the sun god accounts for the prefix "Sûrya" to the family name.

Now well equipped, he made war on the Yakshis and Gandharvas, and compelled the Yakshi who had devoured his father to appear before him. She begged for mercy, offering to serve him faithfully. But he would have none of her and made her enter the sacrificial fire, and she was consumed. Then her Gandharva lover turned up, most inconveniently, and cursed the Brahman magician to suffer death on the forty-first following day. It was now the magician's turn to beg for mercy, and the Gandharva, more merciful than the Brahman had been to the Yakshi, extended it to him. On one condition, however, that on the forty-first day he would worship at the Alangât Tiruvalore temple in expiation. Naturally, he went to fulfil it, and preparatory to worshipping, descended into the temple tank to bathe. All at once he was seized with delirium and raved like a maniac, biting the wooden beams of the bathing shed. He died after enduring frightful agonies. The marks of his teeth are to be seen to this day! Moral—Don't meddle with magic.

Another famous magician was by caste a Ravuthan (a class of Tamil Muhammadans of which there are a few on the west coast) who died about 30 years ago. The story is that having been turned out of his father's house, he was in sad plight, when, awaking from sleep under a tree, a white-bearded Rishi * confronted him and presented him with a grandha of magic, which he put to such good use that he died a very wealthy man. Here are two authenticated stories from the families of Nâyars of good position whom he assisted in each case.

(1) A Nâyar lady, having lost several children in infancy, sought the magician. He came to her house, and asked for a common mud pot, a fowl, some rice and some pepper. With what formality is not said, but the fowl (alive?), the rice and the pepper were put into the pot, which was buried in the ground under the lady's cot. Every day, she ate some of the rice and pepper, and in due time produced a daughter who is now living.

(2) Nearly every young Nâyar woman wears a talisman, protective against evil spirits. The Ravuthan

* It is rather comical, a Rishi appearing to a Muhammadan! Again the queer mixture of religious ideas.

7;Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955

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Rangachari (1909, V, p. 320), reports that in Travancore, the 'leading villager' gave his consent and received gifts from the bridegroom 'as if to recompense him'. This recalls the statement of one informant of Pālakkara, who said he had heard a rumour that in ancient days, the Asān of the village had the right to deflower retainer-Nayar women, a right which he might forgo on payment of a sum of money.[1]

The *tāli* is, as Thurston & Rangachari observe, shaped like a leaf of the *Ficus religiosa* (pipal) tree (*aswattha*). This tree is worshipped by Nayars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans as an embodiment of the Sanskrit god Vishnu. It is said to symbolize male creative power, the female tree with which it is associated being the *veppu* or margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*).[2] In the Tamil country, the two trees are frequently planted together in a mock-marriage ceremony, so that the creeping stems of the margosa may twine round the pipal tree like the arms of a faithful wife round her husband. Among Nayars, Tiyyars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans, barren women are counselled to march a hundred and eight times round the ficus tree to obtain children. We are therefore probably justified in regarding the *tāli* as a phallic symbol, presented to the bride as a sign 'that she may now do what she pleases'.[3]

Innes (1908, p. 174) and Krishna Menon (1894) reports that, traditionally, the bridegroom's party approached the house flourishing weapons and shouting a war-cry. Later, before tying the *tāli*, the bridegroom laid his sword across his lap, and the girl took an arrow and a mirror in her hand. Mateer (1883) says that in Travancore, if the family were too poor to perform the ceremonies, the girl's mother might tie her *tāli* before a sword or a clay idol representing Kāma Devan, the Hindu god of passion.[4] Similarly, since the traditional ceremony died out, many Pālakkara mothers take their immature daughters to some Brahmanical temple dedicated to Vishnu (the god of marital and domestic prosperity) and themselves tie the *tāli* before the god.

Fawcett (1901, pp. 229–32) observes that the girl's brother carried her into the marriage hall from the house, bore her three times round it, and seated her to the left of the bridegroom; Innes (1908, p. 174) remarks that she might be carried there either by her brother or her *kāranavan*. On the fourth day, after their bath, the couple returned to the girl's ancestral house to find its doors shut against them. The bridegroom must force open the doors before he could take his seat with his bride in the kitchen where they ate a meal together. Alternatively, he might enter the house last in the procession, when boys of the girl's lineage pelted him with plantain fruits, which he must ward off with his shield.

According to Innes (*ibid.* p. 173), before the rite the girl was secluded for three days and nights in an inner room of the house, with a brass hand-mirror in her right hand, an arrow in her left, and the eight auspicious objects before her. On the second morning she went to the bathing pool, on the bank of which she must, after bathing, jump thrice over a brass vessel of water with an unhusked coconut on top, overturning both at the third time.

I turn to the rite in the royal lineages. In the Cochin lineage, which prides itself on ancient, 'true' Kshattriya descent, the rite took the form of a Brahmanical marriage ceremony with Sanskrit *mantras* from the Grihya Sutras. It was performed separately for each girl before puberty by a Nambūdiri, who must actually deflower the girl on the night of the ceremonies. The bridegroom received a fee and departed after four days. The girl might then cohabit

[1] Dr Aiyappan (1933) similarly reports that the Asān in some areas deflowered Nayar women at a ceremonial initiation.

[2] For a discussion of the symbolic significance of this tree see Dubois (1906, p. 652).

[3] My interpretation of the *tāli* as a phallic symbol is the more likely in that among Tamil Smartha Brahmans of Tanjore, the marriage *tāli* bears engraved upon it a *lingam*, the phallic emblem of Siva.

[4] This modern rite recalls the ceremonial marriage of the Devadasis (temple-dancers and prostitutes) in the Tamil country, in which the dedicated girl's *tāli* is tied by the temple priest before the god of the temple, or, if a girl fails to become dedicated to a god before puberty, by her mother in the presence of a sword. The 'marriage' is followed after puberty by the nuptials, at which a wealthy high caste man of the neighbourhood passes the night with the girl as the first of her lovers.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWII Kerala AWII

Nayar
Tiyyar

588 182 184 *sambandham* lover he came in a different role. Among South Malabar Tiyyars the prospective husband might tie the *tāli*. But in this case, too, his roles were kept separate: the post-puberty marriage rites must be gone through if the bridegroom (with his brothers) became permanently married to the girl. In any case the ritual bridegroom was usually a small boy; this is the important point here. Among North Malabar Tiyyars a potential mother-in-law tied the *tāli*, or else the barber woman, though in this ceremony the barber is protagonist in the rites marking the girl's passage to womanhood. In the higher matrilineal castes, and among North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, the rite is performed by an elder of high rank. Among North Malabar Nayars, however, the lower caste Marar drummers (who, like the barber for Tiyyars, conduct Nayar funeral rites) play a role suspiciously like secondary bridegrooms, since they place ornaments on the girl's arms and address her for the first time as a married woman, before the *tāli* is tied.

588 182 833 My hypothesis is that in all these cases the choice of *tāli*-tier indicates, on the part of men of the society, a general, unconscious fear of deflowering women. Barbosa (Stanley tr. 1866, p. 7) gives us a clue to this when he says that even after the *tāli*-rite, Nayar mothers went 'begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women'. Castenada (Kerr ed. 1911), similarly reports that in the Zamorin's family the girl's kindred 'send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin, after which he hangs a jewel round her neck. . . .' Even for the Zamorin's sisters, therefore, the 'initiator' 's role was unpopular: he must be induced with gifts to fulfil it. Hamilton (1727, p. 374) notes that the 'Nambourie or chief priest' must deflower the Zamorin's Nayar mistress (presumably at the *tāli*-rite) before the Zamorin could cohabit with her, and that 'some of the Nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute'. That the Nambûdiris' privilege was not one exacted under protest from the Nayars, but willingly accorded, appears from his remark that 'the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves'.

182 588 564 881 The unwillingness to deflower a woman is explained on the grounds that it is a 'disgrace' and an 'unclean thing'. Here, evidently, is the clue to why the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli* was tied by a barber woman, and the rites symbolizing defloration, or perhaps conferring fertility on the woman, performed by a barber man. Tiyyar barbers, like their washermen, pollute Tiyyars and may not ordinarily touch them. Both castes attend at the real first menstruation of a North Malabar Tiyyar girl, where the barber man and barber woman perform ceremonies similar to those of the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. The Tiyyar washerwoman must at all times supply the girl with a lower cloth (*mattu*, 'change') in which [842] to bathe on the fourth morning of menstruation. She supplies this cloth also for the bath after the mock seclusion before the *tāli*-rite. At the real puberty-rites, however, it is the headman [533] of the washerman caste, and not a woman, who hands the clean loin-cloth on the third night [789] to kinswomen of the girl, after singing a song designed to enhance her fertility.

564 88 182 842 [782] [533] The role of the washerman as a man associated with the fertility of women appears again in the first menstruation ceremony of South Malabar Nayars. Though the Nayar washerman washes ordinary cloths for Nayars, the lower caste, Tiyyar washermen (*Mannan*) provides the clean loin-cloth for bathing after menstruation and child-birth. At the Nayar puberty-rites, after the ceremonial bath on the fourth morning, the eldest washerman stands on the verandah and instructs the girl, who sits before him within the house, to make an offering with rice and coconuts to the sacred household lamp. While the natal kinsmen of the girl hide themselves on the back verandah (a place usually occupied by women) a group of washermen assemble on the front verandah and sing vulgar songs relating to sexual intercourse before the girl and her kinswomen, with a view to enhancing her fertility. At the end, her mother pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

pregnant woman, taking a sword, generally kept for this purpose, and holding it in the left hand points it to her mouth. The juice is then poured on it in such a way as to fall by drops into her open mouth. After this, one of the women of the *enangar* group smears the body and head of the pregnant woman with coco-nut oil and takes her to the tank. She is also required to choose one from a collection of different grains, and it is believed you can say from the choice what the sex of the child is going to be.

The significance of the ceremony seems to be twofold. First, it is the official notification to the allied families as well as to the local village groups of the fact that a woman is lawfully pregnant in the house. The intervention of the *Ammāri* or the mother's brother's wife is supposed to show that everything is as it ought to be. It is, therefore, in the first place merely a social announcement. Secondly, the actual ceremony with the sword is supposed to have the effect of making the child a warrior, and it is believed to impart the virtues of bravery, manliness and honest dealing. It is, therefore, in the classification of Van Genepp, a rite direct, sympathetic, automatic and positive. The tamarind juice is believed to create sensitiveness and honour. It is a "contagionist" rite. Whenever a man shows cowardice, the question that is asked as a mark of contempt is: "Were you not born after *Pulicudi?*" or "did not your mother drink the tamarand juice?"

After the *Pulicudi* there are many prohibitions which a pregnant woman has to respect. Of this the most important is the absolute sexual tabu which dates from the *Pulicudi* to forty days after the childbirth. Other tabus are mainly connected with food and are mostly "contagionist" positively or negatively. Thus the woman is not supposed to take very warm food, as it might scorch the head of the child; she is not supposed to eat much hot food (chilis, pepper, etc.), because it might put out the eyes of the child. There are no definite rules about these, but every mother in her desire to do the child no possible harm keeps herself away from all doubtful matter.

After the birth of the child there is a mild pollution (as compared to the strong untouchable pollution caused by death) in the family. This pollution does not carry any disabilities except the prohibition to enter any sacred precincts. On the fifteenth day there is a purificatory ceremony, but there are no festivities or celebrations connected with it.

The mother and the child are accommodated in a special room which no man may enter. Unmarried girls, unless they are little children, are also not allowed to go near. The child, of course, can be seen by all after the cutting and burying of the umbilical cord. It is handed round to the father and other interested relations. No kind of food except the mother's milk is given to it, and, if the mother died at the birth of the child, it is generally given the milk of some relations or even of outsiders who have children of almost the same age. The person whose milk the child thus drinks, though she be an outsider, is considered equal to its own mother, and her children are considered the same as own brothers. There is a story of a Nāyar

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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Nayar

595 564 [184] responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

83 564 The *Smriti*[1] says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sástrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkathúyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders [178] of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

595 70 Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigue was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.[2] The subjection of the males of 835 a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

174 595 European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In [591] ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in [592] her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the [842] function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.
2. Essays of Michael Montaigue.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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[842]

impossible to determine. It was under the influence of the tangible fact of maternity, that the notions of race, family and inheritance were elaborated and developed. Against this is the fact, that the jungle tribes and very low castes have a regular system of marriage and a kind of paternal inheritance.

Sir Henry Mayne maintains that the origin of society in patriarchal lines, is that polyandry and kinship through females are of temporary duration, liable to be brought about at any stage in the progress of society by peculiar circumstances under which it may be placed. If this were true, the popular belief that Nambuthiris brought it about to accommodate their domestic habits is easily proved.

Letourneau says that there is no warrant to consider this form of conjugal union as having been general, but that it is in exceptional form brought about by necessity in a good number of gross societies. This view to some extent is shared by Herbert Spencer who says that polyandry is one form of marital relations or arrangements independently originating in the earliest societies by successive limitations of promiscuity. Lastly, the opinion is unanimous that the Nayars and other *marumakkathâyis* are Dravidians and that polyandry and its accompanying incidents prevailed in Southern India among the non-Aryan tribes. There is strong reason to think, that the *thâli* tying ceremony, the prohibition of sexual union outside the caste, and the doctrine of *Anulomam* and *Pathilomam* were orginally introduced by Nambuthiri Brahmans as restrictions on promiscuities. Thus, so different are the views of anthropologists on this subject, that it still remains an unsettled problem in the ethnology of Kerala. As has been already said, the custom of polyandry is dead. The women of the upper and middle classes are monogamous, and marriage in practice amply satisfies the definition of Lord Penzance in Hyde v. Hyde, namely, "the voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all other".

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Polygamy.

There is nothing which prevents a man from entering into conjugal relations with more than one woman at a time; nevertheless, it is seldom practised. Indeed, when a man feels happy and contented with his own wife, very seldom has he any inclination to form *sambandham* with another for the sake of novelty unless forced by the

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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Sivagothrakkar (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu.

A Nayar tarawad or marumakkathayam family.

"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appreciated the maternal family, nor developed it more logically than the Nayars, despite the accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."[1] The *tarawad* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *kāranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

1. Primitive folk, page 159.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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deliberately refused to be a father and deprived himself of the sweet cares involved by the rearing of the children, they were indignant with a girl who refused to be a mother, and those who had not reproduced their species were considered to be subject to terrible punishments in the next world. The old order of things has given place to the new. Many of the old time-honoured customs have already disappeared or begun to disappear. The senior woman is no longer the head of the family, and she has given place to the eldest male member who is known as *kāranavan*. In a joint family which contains a large or fairly a large number of females and males, the former with their children occupy the main building or buildings and the latter live apart in another edifice close to and separated from them. Each of the married women has a room or two; and here her husband visits her. The old women and others occupy the common portion of the house. The boys under age live with their mother under whose care they always are, and the father as a casual visitor does not generally concern himself with the rearing of children. These, after coming of age, join the the adult members, and if they can afford it, live in houses of their own with their wives and children. Where the domestic environments are favourable and the influence of the *kāranavan* (as the father in a patriarchal family) and other senior member prevails, the junior members seldom go wrong. In some cases where such influences do not exist, their conduct is not always satisfactory. The habits of the members are generally regular, and the usual time of rising throughout the year is early dawn. After rising, the males either go to their daily routine, or wait for their morning light meal which they partake after bathing and after worshipping the deity in the local temple. The women attend to their children, look to the domestic minor work, bathe and prepare the breakfast. Great attention is paid to their personal cleanliness. As water is near at hand, men, women, and children take a great pleasure in bathing, which, besides being conducive to cleanliness, is also considered purificatory and curative. Their substantial dinner is, as a rule, a little before midday, and the rest of the day is occupied by the women and others either in the perusal of religious books or in the playing of some indoor game, while visits in the afternoon are also indulged in.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

This no doubt acted as a strong incentive for women not to create a situation which might lead to such unpleasantness, and contributed greatly in forcing the wife to conform to the rules of polyandry in what concerned her.

Were there any illegitimate children in the Thandan community, and what was their fate if there were? I was assured that they would be considered bastards and outcast. It was also said that the man responsible for them might be forced to support them on complaint of the woman to the Collector. This was the only information that I was able to elicit concerning such cases, Panju declining any knowledge of them. The interpreter made it clear, however, that he was only thinking of the case of an unmarried mother. Should she have a child in wedlock from someone other than her husbands, it would be very difficult to prove adultery and the child would certainly be considered legitimate and that of the husbands. It was up to them to decide what they would do with their unfaithful spouse, should they be able to prove her misconduct. Actually, there were no illegitimate children to speak of in the area, my interpreter assured me. An unmarried girl expecting a child would most certainly find a young man or young men to take her to wife, and apart from gossip, nothing serious would come of it. He knew of a few cases like this, he told me, but he preferred not to give me further details, nor let me see them. He had mentioned a woman who had complained to the authorities in such a case, since this had actually happened recently. It was, however, a modern development which did not conform to the traditional patterns of Kerala Thandan culture.

I enquired also about prostitution, and was told that this did exist to some extent in the Thandan caste and in other, higher castes. The last war, with its influx of soldiers from outside, was held responsible for this state of affairs, but also the presence of European planters and administrators. There was little venereal disease, although the authority upon which I was told this was not definitive. It did not seem to me very convincing, coming as it did just after the statement concerning the causes of prostitution in the State.

Birth control was not practised since it was contrary to Hindu religious convictions. Abortions were rare, and it could be seen that the population was increasing steadily and unchecked. There was no female infanticide, and both my informant and my interpreter seemed surprised that I should ask if there were. Women were highly valued in Kerala, they said, and there was no reason not to want them.

Feeling that I would obtain more detailed information concerning the